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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 001599

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [VE](#)
SUBJECT: CHAVEZ FIRES UP THE BASE

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Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR FRANCISCO FERNANDEZ,
FOR REASON 1.4(D)

¶1. (C) Summary: During visits to Anzoategui, Barinas, and Zulia States from November 14 to 16, Chavez renewed his threats to arrest Zulia governor and Maracaibo mayoral candidate Manuel Rosales. He also told supporters to "stay in the streets" following the vote and "stay alert" against alleged opposition plans to dispute the election tallies. The National Electoral Council (CNE) has reacted in uncharacteristic haste against violations by several media outlets which disregarded the November 15 suspension of broadcasting polling data, pledging to open administrative investigations into several pro-government newspapers and TV programs. End Summary.

CHAVEZ RENEWS ATTACKS AGAINST OPPOSITION

¶2. (SBU) At a November 16 rally in Zulia State, Chavez announced that current governor and opposition mayoral candidate Manuel Rosales is a "brazen thief" and is planning to flee Venezuela for one of his allegedly dubiously-acquired multiple properties in the United States. Chavez told supporters that Rosales "wants to see me dead, but I only want to see him dead politically, and I announce that he is going to jail." The President promised to provide new information in the coming days that add to the allegations he has already lodged against Rosales, which include his involvement in a purported coup plot against the President, narcotrafficking, and corruption. Chavez also pledged a "new Zulian era" starting on November 23 and said he would to use Russian assistance to build a nuclear reactor in the state, should his PSUV candidate for governor, Maracaibo mayor Gian Carlo Di Martino, win. The same day, Vice President Ramon Carrizales announced that Rosales would lose the immunity granted by his office on election day and threatened him with jail, arguing that Rosales should be "detained without special proceedings" once he is no longer governor.

¶3. (SBU) Chavez traveled to Barinas State November 15 for the third time this election season to offer his support to his brother, Adan Chavez, who is running for the governorship. The President was accompanied by his father, current governor Hugo de los Reyes Chavez, his mother, and his other five siblings, including Anibal, who is running for the mayorship of their hometown of Sabaneta. The President told his supporters that Barinas represents an "example of the socialist revolution," and called pro-government dissident gubernatorial candidate Julio Cesar Reyes a "traitor" and said he should be rebaptized as "Judas Cesar."

He threatened that "if they (the opposition or Cesar Reyes) win Barinas, it would be for me a punch to the gut," and asked voters to "clean the rats" out of the state -- presumably a reference to Cesar Reyes. A Catholic church in Barinas municipality was graffitied the day following Chavez's visit with messages to remove the bishop, "Viva Adan Chavez, Governor," and "fatherland, socialism, or death." The messages came three days after Bishop Ramon Antonio Linares Sandoval, of the Barinas diocese, denounced in a press conference that his church was being "threatened" by Chavistas.

14. (SBU) Chavez visited Anzoategui State November 14 and stumped alongside PSUV governor Tarek William Saab, who is seeking reelection. The President told his supporters that "if the opposition does not want to go to vote, don't go, but not a single Chavista can stay home without voting." He added that "the opposition has spread the idea that the military are sold, that they're worthless, and that to win, (the opposition) would eliminate them." Chavez asked his supporters to stay in the street after voting and be wary against opposition plans to steal the vote, asserting that "nobody should go home after voting, the patrols (grassroots activists) in the streets, the battalions in the streets, and I will have the armed forces in the streets, to see who dares." William Lara, PSUV candidate for the Guarico State governorship, echoed Chavez's claims the same day, asserting that the opposition -- including pro-government third party Patria Para Todos -- is trying to "create chaos and generate hate in the oppositionist sectors in order to assume violent conduct," and asked Chavistas to "stay in the streets" following the vote.

CNE REACTS TO POLLING VIOLATION

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15. (SBU) CNE president Tibisay Lucena pledged November 17 to open an administrative investigation into former Vice President Jose Vicente Rangel's TV program, "Jose Vicente Today," for announcing polling results on pro-government Televen TV hours after a one week cut-off on broadcasting the information, which is mandated by the CNE. Vicente Rangel apologized for the error and contended that he had recorded the show several days prior to the cut-off, which was on November 15, and in the interim had been too busy to remember about the planned broadcast. Lucena pointed out that a local radio program in Guarico State and the pro-government daily Vea had committed the same violation and would also face an investigation. On November 16, Vea published an article entitled "Starting Today It Is Prohibited to Publish Polls" on the page directly opposite an article summarizing the findings of a poll from American Opinion Research that favored the PSUV.

COMMENT

16. (C) Chavez's campaign remains focused on energizing his supporters to get out to the polls with threats of opposition plans to steal the vote. Adding fuel to the fire, however, he is now asking Chavistas to stay out in the streets after voting while simultaneously threatening military action. Although Venezuela has little history of election-related violence and several political observers have told us they see a new degree of voter apathy and dispassion this year, Chavez's message of grassroots resistance could potentially result in isolated cases of violence in areas with contested races. The CNE's admonishment of former Vice President Rangel and pro-government daily Vea are only token actions during an election period in which the CNE repeatedly declined to address President Chavez's violations of election rules. The GBRV and PSUV remain synonymous for all intents

and purposes. End Comment.
CAULFIELD